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THE
YEARLY MOONS.

BY
JOSEPH H. YOUNG.

Maecenas * * * * *
* * * * *
Sunt quos curriculo pulverem Olympicum
Collegisse juvat, * * * * *
* * * * *
Quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseris,
Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.

HORACE, ODE I., BOOK I.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.
1883.

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Ms. A. 9. 2. 10. 11. 12.

THE YEARLY MOONS.



TO THE

RARE FRIEND, AND MOST POLITE PATRON OF LETTERS,

WHO, TAKING MY MUSE KINDLY

BY THE HAND, PRESENTS HER, IN THE SPACIOUS ODEON OF HER SISTERS,

TO THE READER'S ATTENTIVE AUDIENCE,

THESE SONNETS

ARE MOST CORDIALLY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.



JANUARY.

A dashing youth is he whose coursers fleet
Outrun the steeds of Phœbus' flying car.
His horses are the winds, his lash the sleet,
He rides the storm, and cometh from afar,—
The world where everlasting ages are.
But he is young, and beautiful his feet
Upon the mountains of the morn. We greet,
O happy Year and New, we greet thy face
And hail in thee fond Hope's eternal star.
Be thou propitious, and thy dwelling-place
For aye shall be our hearts, nor memory mar
Thy features fair with rue's regretful scar.—
But look, look there! a shade—a spectre fast
Behind him rides. Alack! my heart, it is the past.

FEBRUARY.

The darkness deepens just before the day,
When night on night sweeps downward from the pole.
Then watchers weary for the morning pray;
And noisome dewes exhale, as if they stole
From yawning sepulchres. Upon my soul,
O Winter, now at length thy shadows lay
As if the weeks would never wear away;
And dank and grewsome is thy feverous breath.
Hark! Wailing bells—heavy and hoarse; they toll,
Timing their measures to the march of death.
Be still, sad heart: the waves of grief that roll
Tremendous o'er thy sinking hopes,—their goal
Is Heaven's shining shore; and they shall bear
Thy sorrow on their crest, and lay it safely there.

III.

MARCH.

Ah, wild and wayward offspring of the Sun!

First-born from his reunion with the sphere
That turns again to greet his kiss upon

The inconstant face which shuns him every year,
And every year repents 'mid the severe
Regrets and penances of winter dun,

Drear, dark, and desolate;—the frigid nun
Among her sister planets. Headstrong child,

Thou wouldst despoil the hopes that now appear
In greening blades and swelling buds beguiled

By thee, thou counterfeit, whose treacherous leer
Takes on a smile. For when subsides her fear,
And Life from long duress adventures forth—
Full in her face thy blast hurls havoc from the North.

IV.

A P R I L.

O season, throned above the Pleiades,

That setting, weep afresh to see thee rise
Supremely regent o'er the rainy seas

Aerial which issue from their eyes;—

Thy robe of purple is the rainbow's dyes
All spangled with the fleck of golden bees
Early astir among the lilac trees.

Nor is she less a woman than a queen

Who changes with her shifting mind the skies;
So varying moods diversify the scene,

Or cold or warm or gay or full of sighs,

As now she, beaming, laughs or, frowning, cries;—
Eager to make and passionate to mar
The joy of Spring wherein she shines the morning star.

M A Y.

The apple-blossoms of the sweet month May
Upon the maiden Spring's uplifted brow
Fall in a bridal veil of balmy spray.

She seeks from Heaven annunciation now :

It is her wedding-day; and He whose vow
Forever with an everlasting "Yea"
Swears that the seed-time shall not pass away—
He is the bridegroom,—Faith and Nature's God.

O happy bride, whom Love does thus endow
With bliss Deific, thrilling deep the sod

That man has lacerated with his plow.

And then thy joy inspires all nature; thou
Dost come rejoicing, with a choiring train
Of mated birds whose songs warble their love's refrain.

J U N E.

O love, the month, the day, the hour is here ;

And where art thou ? Oh, come ! my couch is spread
Upon the immaculate bosom of the year

Throbbing with life whose current, rich and red,
Breaks in the blush of roses that appear
When heaven tells its secret in her ear.

And mine ? Ah, listen !—roses for thy bed
Strewed thick and odorous, and lilies fair

Massed in a pillow for thy fairer head—
Thy own sweet breath and thy own lustrous hair

Shall shame them both. Oh, come ! through arbors green .

And labyrinths of climbing eglantine—
Oh, come, my love ! oh, haste ! oh, fly to me !
In June I pant, I thirst, I faint, I die for thee.

VII.

JULY.

Forbear, O muse. I scarce can creep: the ground
Precipitous uprises with the hight
Of great Olympus into depths profound.

There sits The Thunderer. Sharp lightnings light
The eyes that, under old Egypta's night
Draping his brows, flash forkèd fire. The sound
Falling strikes heavily, and with a bound
Reverberating peals along the sky.

The ocean groans, rolling all ghastly white,
And men and beasts and birds together fly.

O boy, beware that tree. Dread Heaven! thy blight—
Thy thunder-blight has struck, and in the sight—
The sight of his fond eyes its glare expires.
His name was Ganymede, and love the death-bolt fires.

VIII.

AUGUST.

The year is ripening; her girlhood's thrill
Is growing fast into a matron's care.
In clustering grapes the blood begins to fill,—
The smell of blooming corn-fields loads the air
With richness. Hear, O Heaven, a mother's prayer,
And gently lead her anxious feet until
In Autumn's perfect joy thy blessed will
Be done. She hears; and Virgo intervenes,
Blending her smile with Sol's too fervid glare.
Severely chaste she tempers him, and screens
The panting Earth. But do thou still beware
The dog-star's reign. Look skyward! Sirius there
Now rages while he bays the rising moon—
The harvest moon, as soft as eve and fair as noon.

S E P T E M B E R.

Pomona, goddess of the year, thy horn

Is poured into the lap of Autumn crowned

The Queen of queens, laughing them all to scorn,

Such peace and joy within her realm abound.

Knee-deep the wallowing wheel goes gaily round,

Crushing the juicy pulp. The full-ripe corn,

Of stalk and husk and silken tassel shorn,

Glitters in golden heaps that frequent lie,

The shining ore of mines above the ground,—

Bringing to pass the early prophecy

Of yellow daffodils. The love profound

Of Nature's heart in man and brute is wound

In grateful ties about thine own, O God

Incaruate, first and last, in the immortal clod.

OCTOBER.

I stood alone, and Memory came near.

Pensive she came, borne on the dreamy wings
Of thoughts that fill the Autumn of the year,

When Silence lays her hand upon the strings
Of Nature's harp, where Summer's echoings
Linger through ripe September.—Hark! The sere
And falling leaf. O death! and art thou here
Concealed amid the shadows?—Pushing back

Untimely Winter, warm October swings
The closing portals of the Zodiac

Open again. The autumnal splendor flings
On passing Summer and her precious things
A pall of glory. Thus, oh thus, my heart,
Will love transfigure death when life and thou do part?

N O V E M B E R.

Pilgrim of time, thy feet approach a land
Where all is desert—bleak and mournful shore,
Where leafless trees for skeletons upstand,
And dismal winds for wailing ghosts deplore;
The shore of a dead sea, encrusted o'er
With frozen dews. Ah, me! the barren strand
Of age awaits us all, and the command,
Dreadful and stern, “Go forward.” On that brink,
O Thou, in whom our Father we adore,
Divide the waters deathly cold that shrink
The soul with fear. Yet now we live. And more
Wouldst thou? Look back : the past was once before.
The cup within thy hand is Heaven’s choice;
This, this alone, is sure; oh, drink it and rejoice.

DECEMBER.

An old man, bent with age and reft of hope,

Plods heavily along a drifting road.

'Tis night. The tempest howls. In one fell swoop

All ills together join to overload

The steps whose youth the whirlwind did forebode,—

Harvest of stormy seed. Look! on the slope

Verging the grave he totters. Cease to cope,

O single handed, with almighty Fate.—

Alas! the old man reaps but that he sowed.

Resign thee whose repentance comes too late.

When he was young, from out their cold abode

And cavernous, he loosed the winds that showed

No mercy to the traveller whose woes

Now overtake and leave him lost in his own snows.

XIII.

FINALE.

Mortal, so fine and fragile is that thread

Whereon thy life suspended hangs, no eye

But One whose vision keen hath numberèd

The sands of shores whose leagues unmeasured lie

Hath seen it; yet a whole eternity

Ineffable, in one quick moment dread,

Along its quivering tension may be sped.

Infinite soul, conjoined with finite clay,

Thou art a star alight of God most High,

His life thy being. Passing swift away

The dust consumes, but thou shalt shine for aye;

As light of stars accounted dead—shalt fly

On, on, and ever on throughout the vast

Of thought—forever present and forever past.

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